

Present Truth

2 Peter 1:12

Dear Readers,

November 2001

"Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (Philemon 1:3) I pray that all of you are doing well and preparing to meet the Lord. Paul encouraged us to be ready when he wrote, *"now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."* (Romans 13:11) And Amos wrote, *"Prepare to meet thy God."* (Amos 4:12) Don't turn to the government for your salvation and don't rely upon your own ability to save yourself from the troublous times ahead. Turn to the true God of heaven, who is abundantly able and willing to save you out of even the most sinful and corrupt lifestyle. He is our only hope of safety through the times that will soon come upon this world. *"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence [disease]."* (Psalms 91:1-3) For those of you who have been deluded into believing that God will secretly rapture all the true Christians from the earth before things get really bad, I pray that you will wake up before it is too late! For a thorough study on the sequence of end-time events, please contact us and request a free copy of the study entitled "The Millennium."

A Dead Formalism

by Alonzo T. Jones

Unbelieving Israel, not having the righteousness which is of faith, and so not appreciating the great sacrifice that the Heavenly Father has made, sought righteousness by virtue of the offering itself and because of the merit of presenting the offering.

Thus was perverted every form of service and everything which God had appointed to be the means of expression to a living faith and which could not have any real meaning except by the living presence and power of Christ Himself in the life. And even this was not enough. For, not finding the peace and satisfaction of an accomplished righteousness in any of this nor in all of it together, they heaped upon these things which the Lord had appointed for another purpose, but which they had perverted to purposes of their own invention—they heaped upon these things ten thousand traditions, exactions, and hair-splitting distinctions of their own invention, and all, *all*, in a vain hope of attaining to righteousness. For the rabbis taught what was practically a confession of despair, that "If but one person could only for one day keep the whole law and not offend in one point—nay, if but one person could

but keep that one point of the law which affected the due observance of the Sabbath—then the troubles of Israel would be ended and the Messiah at last would come." —Farrar, "Life and Work of St. Paul," p. 37. See also pp. 36, 83. What could possibly more fittingly describe a dead formalism than does this? And yet for all this conscious dearth in their own lives, there was still enough supposed merit to cause them to count themselves so much better than other people that all others were but as dogs in comparison.

It is not so with those who are accounted righteous by the Lord upon a living faith freely exercised. For when the Lord counts a man righteous, he is actually righteous before God, and by this very fact is separated from all the people of the world. But this is not because of any excellence of his own nor of the "merit" of

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Letters from our Readers..... page 4

Questions and Answers page 8

by Lynnford Beachy

anything that he has done. It is altogether because of the excellence of the Lord and of what *He* has done. And the man for whom this has been done knows that in himself he is no better than anybody else, but rather in the light of the righteousness of God that is freely imparted to him, he, in the humility of true faith, willingly counts others better than himself. (Philippians 2:3)

This giving themselves great credit for what they themselves had done and counting themselves better than all other people upon the merit of what they had done—this were at once to land men fully in the complete self-righteousness of Pharisaism. They counted themselves so much better than all other people that there could not possibly be any basis of comparison. It seemed to them a perfectly ruinous revolution to preach as the truth of God that “*there is no respect of persons with God.*” (Romans 2:11)

And what of the actual life of such people, all this time? O, it was only a life of injustice and oppression, malice and envy, variance and emulation, backbiting and talebearing, hypocrisy and meanness, boasting of their great honor of the law, and through breaking the law dishonoring God, their hearts filled with murder and their tongues crying loudly for the blood of One of their brethren, yet they could not cross the threshold of a Roman tribunal “*lest they should be defiled!*” (John 18:28) Intense sticklers for the Sabbath, yet spending the holy day in spying, treachery and conspiracy to murder.

What God thought and still thinks of all such ways as this is shown plainly enough for our present purpose, in just two short passages of scripture. Here is His word to Israel—the ten tribes—while yet their day lingered:

*“I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. **Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.**”* (Amos 5:21-24)

And to Judah near the same time He said the same thing in these words:

“Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of

Gomorrhah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isaiah 1:10-18)

The Lord Himself had appointed these feast days and solemn assemblies, these burnt offerings, meat offerings, and peace offerings, but now He says He hates them and will not accept them. Their fine songs sung by their trained choirs and accompanied with instruments of music, making a grand display—all this that they got off for wonderfully fine *music* He called “*noise,*” and wanted it taken away.

He had never appointed any feast days nor solemn assemblies nor sacrifices nor offerings nor songs for any such purpose as that for which these were used. He had appointed all these as the means of worshipful expression of a living faith by which the Lord Himself should abide in the heart and work righteousness in the life, so that in righteousness they *could* judge the fatherless and plead for the widow and so that judgment *could* run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream.

Songs sung in the pomp and stylish intonation of a vain show are but “*noise,*” while the simple expression, “Our Father,” flowing from a heart touched by the power of a true and living faith and “spoken in sincerity by human lips is music” which enters into the inclining ear (Psalm 116:2) of the Heavenly Father and brings divine blessing in power to the soul.

This and this alone is what He had appointed these things for and never, never to be used in the hollow pretense of a dead formalism to answer in righteousness for the iniquity of a carnal heart. Nothing but the washing away of the sins by the blood of the Lamb of God and the purifying of the heart by living faith—nothing but this could ever make these things acceptable to Him who appointed them.

Even this side of the cross of Christ, which itself should be the everlasting destruction of it, the same dead formalism, an empty profession, has exalted itself, and has been the bane of the profession of Christianity everywhere. Very soon, unconverted men crept into the church and exalted themselves in the place of Christ. Not finding the living presence of Christ in the heart by living faith, they have ever since sought to have the forms of Christianity supply the lack of His presence, which alone can give meaning and life to these forms.

In this system of perverseness, regeneration is through the form of baptism and even this by a mere sprinkling of a few drops of water. The real presence of Christ is in the form of the Lord's supper. The hope of salvation is in being connected with a form of the church. And so on throughout the whole list of the forms of Christianity, they have heaped upon this, ten thousand inventions of their own in penances, pilgrimages, traditions and hair-splitting distinctions.

And as of old and always with mere formalists, the life is simply and continually the manifestation of the works of the flesh—strife and contention, hypocrisy and iniquity, persecution, spying, treachery, and every evil work. *This is the Papacy.*

This evil spirit of a dead formalism, however, has spread itself far beyond the bounds of the organized Papacy. It is the bane of the profession of Christianity everywhere today, and even the profession of the Christianity of the third angel's message has not entirely escaped it. It is to be the worldwide prevailing evil of the last days up to the very coming of the Lord in glory in the clouds of heaven.

For *"this know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,*

*disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, **having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:** from such turn away."* (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

This all-prevailing form of godliness without the power, and which even denies the power, is the dead formalism against which we are to fight the good fight of living faith. The living faith which is brought to the world in the third angel's message is to save us from being swallowed up in this worldwide sea of dead formalism.

How is it with you individually today? Is yours a dead formalism or a living faith? Have you the form of godliness without the power? Or have you by living faith the living presence and power of the living Saviour in the heart, giving divine meaning, life and joy to all the forms of worship and of service which Christ has appointed and working the works of God and manifesting the fruits of the Spirit in all the life?

Alonzo T. Jones 1850-1923

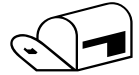
Except as the means of finding Christ the living Saviour *in the word* and the living faith of Him, even this word itself can be turned to a dead formalism now as it was of old when He was on the earth. He said to them then (Revised Version), *"Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me. And ye will not come to me that ye may have life."* (John 5:39, 40)

They thought to find eternal life in the Scriptures *without Christ*; that is, *by doing them themselves*. But *"this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son"* (1 John 5:1)—*as we find Him in the Scriptures*, and not in the words of the Scriptures without Him. For they are they that testify of Him. This is their object. Therefore, *"he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."* (1 John 5:11, 12)

(This article was first printed in two parts in the January 28 and February 4, 1895 issues of *Bible Echo*. It is also found on pages 93-99 of the book *Lessons on Faith*, by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner. Editor)



Letters from our Readers



"In your letter you said the last two lessons sent are the last two lessons in this series. It has been a delightful experience studying through 'Christ Our Righteousness.' Thank you for the encouragement to continue on to 'These Last Days.' I am looking forward to the Bible study. I have the rest of my life to study God's Word, and even then I will not know all there is to know about our loving Creator."

Michigan

"I just cannot believe that a God whose only-begotten Son spent His entire ministry trying to make plain the things of God and of heaven, could possibly expect His children to be satisfied with 'it's all a mystery that we're not meant to understand.' If my earthly father hid his true identity from me, despite living in the same house, I'd be furious with him. It would be hard to love someone like that. To whole-heartedly love someone, you have to know him completely. Why can't people see that??? The paperwork Pastor left with me regarding why the Trinity is right, is so confusing and repetitive of the idea 'we can't understand this mystery,' as to be conclusive evidence to me that we DO have the truth. It sounds too much like the Catholic Church's constantly telling its members that they can't possibly understand the Bible, so leave it to the priesthood and the pope to translate it for them. Now we're doing the same thing."

Colorado

"Please send me more information on your ministry and if you would, please add my name to your mailing list."

"[A friend] sent me a couple of your newsletters, one being 'The Truth About God.' It is good to see others are trying to teach the truth instead of false doctrines."

Texas

"Our family is so glad to hear that your trip to Africa was safe and successful. We thank the Lord that you all made it home safely... Thank you all so much for the ministry that God has entrusted with you. May you grow stronger in His love and truth each day and continue to diligently work to spread the wonderful news of our Father and his Son."

Arkansas

"Just a simple commonsense question for all of you. If you consider the Holy Spirit as the 'third person,' would you consider the 'evil spirit' then as the second person of Satan? Yes or No. If your answer is no, then consider it a fact that the whole doctrine of the trinity is nothing but garbage. It cannot stand against common sense."

California

"Peace of our Lord be unto you once more. Thank you very much for the communication. I am ready to go and

work in the vineyard only where, for all the signs we are seeing and hearing are a warning to us to double our efforts to reach people who are seeking for the truth at this time of grace."

Uganda

"I am a young Christian seeking for more spiritual food and hereby apply for a book entitled, 'Last Day Events,' and would like to get into Bible studies as well. I would be happy to receive the above-applied-for items as stated in the tracts that I came across. I thank you in anticipation."

Zimbabwe

"[We] have been spreading your pamphlets like the leaves of autumn, on Sundays mainly, to most of the churches here in Little Rock. God has surely been with us so far..."

Arkansas

"Thanks for your lovely articles in *Present Truth*. I enjoyed the experiences of the missionaries to Peru and Africa. I praise the Lord for their safety and the ministry to these people in those countries."

"I am willing to support a minister in Africa for \$50.00 a month. Please set me up with one. I would be willing to support one for \$100.00 but I have been sending some money to _____ and Bro. _____ in Nigeria. I was disappointed that they were not mentioned in the reports. Perhaps they could not travel to the area that Lynnford and Howard were preaching at."

Arizona

(Thank you for your willingness to support some of our dear brothers in Africa who are busy spreading the truth. Please keep them in your prayers as well. The two brothers you mentioned were not able to come to Tanzania to meet us, but in any future trips to Africa we hope to include Nigeria on our list of countries to visit.)

Editor)

"Grace and shalom from our heavenly Father 'the Most High God' and Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Saviour and Messiah be poured unto you all. We could reach Chile, the first South American country. We were able to bring 3,000 copies: 'The Love of God,' 'The Holy Spirit' and 'The Idolatry' and it was amazing the way they accepted, but it was short."

"We closed the border of Peru, and the border Chile-Peru, the city name in Chile is Arica. Sister _____ had a dream about a huge idol in white that was destroyed by an earthquake, and the first thing we saw at the arrival at the border city in Chile in top of the mountain called 'Morro de Arica' a huge white idol. While we were passing out tracts, a young 17 year old girl tried to commit suicide, jumping out from [the mountain], but we were praying since the night we arrived and this girl was saved,

praise the Lord! At the bottom of the mountain are a bunch of crosses from prior suicides. While people were watching the rescue we were witnessing, we ran out of tracts, but this is just the beginning; only the truth will set them free.”

Peru

“I was born into Christianity but I was introduced to the truth about God and Christianity not long ago. The Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches are virtually teaching the commandments of men rather than that of God. Through the message delivered by some true pastors of God, I was introduced to the Revelation and actual truth about God.

“I would like to preach this message to my church members so that they may choose between the commandments of men and that of God. For instance, the celebration of Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Valentine’s Day and most importantly, observing Sunday as the Sabbath instead of Saturday. In Revelation 13 it shows clearly that anyone who has the mark of the beast will not enter the kingdom of God.”

Ghana

“I am a man of 30 years of age, and would like to request for a Bible study course that you provide. I am an interested student of the Bible and I believe that I will be richly blessed by the study and further request if I could have any spiritual books that would assist me in my study.”

Zimbabwe

“My name is ____ and I am doing time here in a State of Oregon prison. However, I am a Christian and praise the Lord. A friend of mine sent your address to me so I thought I would write a letter to see what kind of response I would get and to see if you will actually read this letter or not.”

Oregon

“I have to thank you very, very much indeed for your parcel in which you enclosed some of your literature, booklets and pamphlets. Also a letter dated April 5th, 2001 was enclosed... I wish to congratulate you for placing my name on your mailing list...

“The books you sent will be read by perhaps hundreds and hundreds of people of all walks of life and of different denominations. I will preserve them in our village library, in which I am the librarian myself, and I will see to it that they last as long as possible. All the magazines you send are also kept there.

“Once again, we thank you.”

Tanzania

“Good News!! Things are going very well here. On Sabbath October 20th, 2001, eight people have accepted the message, Praise God... Presently, we have a problem that has affected our ministry—so much requests for our literature and the invitations for seminars are increasing continually. We find it difficult to meet the demand because is country wide. Right now, we have no materials

for distribution. I suggest to rent a photocopying machine urgently to meet the demand for literatures for our correspondence students (countrywide)... Thank you for the prayers and support for the work, which is progressing well. We are all busy going door to door, witnessing for Christ, and God is good to us. We are experiencing His leading in our lives and in the ministry in which we are involved. Our prayers are with you and we pray that our Lord will keep you and bless you.”

Zambia

(I would like to share a small pamphlet with you that we received from the man in Zambia who wrote the above letter. We do not share this pamphlet with you to appeal for financial help for ourselves, but rather to pass along an appeal from some of our brethren in Africa.

Editor)

Who is Telling the Truth About God?

Project Phase 1

Mission Zambia

Volunteers are invited to take the Three Angels’ Messages of Revelation 14:6-12 in October, November, and December 2001.

As funds permit, seminars and distribution of literature will occur in these areas: Lusaka, Kabwe, Kapirit, Mposhi, Livingstone, Mkushi, Serenje, Choma, Sesheke, Kaoma, Mongu, Senanga, Kalabo, Mumbwa, Liteta, Luapula Province, etc.

Will you join? Will you help us now? Tracts, Bible Lessons and Newsletters will be distributed in **English, French, Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, Lozi, Lunda, Luvale, and Kaonde.**

Funds Needed for Completion: \$1500

The Macedonian Cry is sounding from all countries.
(Acts 16:9, 10)

**Help us step into phase 1
We need your response today!**

Our main goal is to more clearly reveal the character of God and His Son (Godhead) “We stand rebuked by God because many countries are unworked and unwarned!”

If you would like to help with this project,
Write to:

***The King is Coming
Evangelism Training Institute***

P.O. Box 32804
Lusaka, Zambia

E-mail: Digittech@zamtel.zm

Account number 010506245900 Standard Chartered Bank
Zambia Ltd., North End Branch, P.O. Box 31353, Lusaka,
Zambia.

Thank You!

(The following letter was also written by the same man, Benny Kayamba, who sent us the preceding pamphlet.

Editor)

“Thank you for your letter you sent to us. We have received [the money] that you have sent us, and we are very much grateful, thank you. We do appreciate your desire to help us and other countries to carry the everlasting gospel to the perishing world. We are glad to be part of it. Our prayer is that we, too, may be daily sanctified by this truth... May God continue to guide and bless you in your work for Him.

“We need also two small King James Bibles for seminars. In the future we need very much to have a computer for e-mail and printing.”

Zambia

“I am a pastor, working individually with six workers and having more than three hundred members in India. Actually, we were members in ____ Church. Now we are doing missionary work continuously. We are also Sabbath keepers.

“Recently one of my friends, Pastor ____, talked with us about your work, especially about *Present Truth*, the monthly magazine. Really, we are very interested to know more about your thoughts. We want to know about you more and more because of our Bible Sabbath observance.

“Can you help us by literature, especially Bibles? We want more Bibles to distribute to our faithful and poor believers and if possible we want to learn about the everlasting message through yourself directly. Do you want to come to India and start your church here? If yes, we are inviting you in the wonderful name of our loving Saviour, Jesus. We are expecting for your reply and prayer. We are also praying for you and your work. May God bless you.”

India

“Please send the following: [booklets]... I would also like to get all the back issues of the *Present Truth* up to October 2001.

“Enclosed is the cost for the materials ordered and some extra. If it doesn't cover the cost of the newsletters, let me know.”

Texas

“I hope you are all fine in the Lord! I have just been from Kiboga yesterday. My family has sent you greetings. And the work of the Lord is ripe and shows that we were very, very late. But all the same as we still have this minute time of mercy left for us, I have promised to surrender my whole life to the Lord to use me wherever He will direct me.

“I have received your e-mail concerning the visit in Kenya for the meeting at Homa Bay. I am very ready and I am arranging to meet with Brother ____ in Tororo for this issue. And at the same time I have received a letter from [him] informing me to reach Tororo immediately, for there is a brother from western Kenya... who is also inter-

ested in the message. He wants us to go there. At my place people are calling, but due to the limit of means, as I previously notified you, our money is valueless and transport is very high as the country is landlocked. To get fuel is very hard, that's why transport is high.

“So with all these failures in the transport, I still ask you kindly not to get embarrassed for my frequent requests. I hope the Lord will bless you urgently.”

Uganda

“Grace be with you, mercy and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for yours of 22nd October, 2001, 6:57 p.m. and for the information about winter time. I have not visited USA. This will be the first time, so you know better than myself the right time to visit there.

“I do not have any other reason for coming to you than my spiritual growth, and no other desire than to do the work of God. So my only reason is that I want to learn the truth, (2) to know how to keep the Sabbath, (3) to know your operational system. I only know the truth about Sabbath from you and before one will be a teacher, he must be taught; iron sharpens iron. One man opens the eyes of the other. I want to preach this Sabbath faith like you are doing, so I have need to see you, and want to join you to fight the good fight of faith. I want to preach and defend the Sabbath, and thousands are perishing. There are souls to win for God and I want to go, whether it will cost me death or life... I want to see you and discuss my matters with you.

“My plan is to start having crusade meetings. Another area I need your help is materials to work with. That is why I need to see you in person, so that you hear from me direct and understand my heart desire and the way to aid. I will like to preach the Sabbath truth in my country Nigeria and other African countries. This is why I want to follow your footsteps.

“I am not looking for a way to hide myself in America; I must come back to Nigeria to practice what I learn from you, also teach others. I want you to help in my spiritual growth, and two cannot work together unless they are agreed. ‘Letter is letter.’ I want you to hear from me and help me to grow, and I must follow you to the end.

“Do not have any fear about me, I sure am a child of God, and want to do His will only, you will also find out. I look forward to hearing from you instantly to be sure if I will attend the interview on Monday 29th October, 2001 or not. Send my greetings to your family.”

Nigeria

“Hope you had a wonderful and restful Sabbath. The Lord has brought several scriptures to light today in our studies, you probably already know them, but we'd like to share them anyway! Job 33:4; 26:13; Romans 8:26, 27 & 34; and Hebrews 7:25. These are just a few more scriptures that prove that the Holy Spirit can refer to Jesus Him-

self, as well as to the Father. May the Lord continue to bless you and all the others this message will reach. May we with the Lord's help continue to make the crooked way straight."

Arkansas

"We are seeking the kingdom of God and his justice and doing our best in serving God and obeying the commandments, also fulfilling Jesus' commandments as is written in Matthew 28. We get joy in serving our Master. Sometimes it feels that we are not doing so much, but it is with His Spirit, that we win the battles. Amen.

"I was doubting to do this request; but I feel in my heart, just to do it, taking Jeremiah 33:3, Luke 1:37 and Jeremiah 32:17; based on that, I will do it.

"We used to have a computer. It was old, but was working; but now my brother took it, because it was his. He let us use it, but now he is in the university and he took it back. We have so much work to do and without a computer it is impossible. We are working now with an old word processor but it is not enough.

"So my request to you is that if you... could raise an offering to purchase a computer here.

"Here in Peru it is not that easy. Just to give you a testimony; I, as a teacher, make a little bit over one hundred dollars a month, and most of my income goes into the work here in Peru. My tithes, offerings and printing work. Every diskette costs a dollar; and just to give you an example, to do the work of 'The Reward of the Wicked' not having the computer gave me an expense of renting a computer for 14 hours at the cost of a dollar an hour, plus 25 cents of every printing page. Brother ____ told me, that this is not like the USA, here they don't have computers in the libraries. This is sad, to see a country where they live under the curse. That is why my request goes to you... I know God is still blessing the USA, because of brothers and sisters like you, that are obedient to the Word of God. I am trusting to the Lord for this request, that our Father in heaven will pour love into your hearts, so we may continue the work of the Lord here.

"We are in the process of translating 'Which God' and 'Who is the God of the Bible.'"

Peru

(This dear sister and her husband have translated into Spanish the tracts, "The Love of God," "The Truth About God," "The Reward of the Wicked," and a few others. We have printed some of these tracts, and are working on getting the rest printed. Please pray for these dear brethren in Peru.

Editor)

"Thank you for the impressive 'Certificate of Achievement' sent for the completion of 'Christ Our Righteousness' Bible study course. I will keep this with my certified accomplishments. I am looking forward to 'These Last Days' Bible study. The first two completed lessons are enclosed with this letter..."

"I appreciate all the good things you do for me and the many others you come in contact with. Our service to God is never finished. It may not always be easy to administer, but there is nothing more rewarding in the long run. Keep up the good work."

Michigan

"Grace and Peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord..."

"I am patiently waiting for the box you promised to post for me. I believe the contents will bring me closer to God.

"I understand you have video tapes in the series, 'The Good News About God'... I would love to have almost all of them because they are of paramount importance to me. But because I am facing financial problems, I am failing to reach the required amounts. Worse still, I am one of the Cyclone Ellen victims and I have nothing. Your help in kind and cash will be greatly appreciated and God will honour your help with showers of blessings. However, I do request a study entitled 'What the Bible Says About Hell.' Meanwhile, your lessons you have sent to me are so edifying and have given me a wide Spirit-filled knowledge. May the Lord bless you."

Zimbabwe

"We are students from the ____ High School in the Eastern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea. We seek the Word of God and we wrote to the Advent Truth Distributors in Australia. They replied to us and said they don't supply the free books. They gave us this address, so we write to you Christian friends. On behalf of the students, I write in to your office.

"If this ministry supplies free books in the world to the needy Christian friends, we hope that you can help us. Over 300 students are seeking the Word of God here in the school.

"We want NIV Bibles and KJV Bibles and some other booklets. Please, could you forward us as many books as you can."

Papua New Guinea

(Our ministry is dedicated to providing truth-filled literature to the world. We do not print Bibles here, although we try to keep a small amount on hand for those who are especially in need. We have referred many people to their local Bible Societies or the Gideons who are dedicated to providing large numbers of Bibles. However, we do not provide or recommend the NIV Bible because we do not believe it is the most reliable translation. For more information regarding Bible translations please request the March 1999 issue of *Present Truth*.

Editor)

"The joy of peace be with you and the love of God. I've just completed the last Bible lessons. Thank you for sending them to me. I read your letter and the monthly newsletter. I hope all is well with you there. May the Lord be forever with you and your loved ones... Please remember me in prayer as I do you and yours. May the Lord keep you all in His hands until we meet with Him beyond."

Florida



Questions and Answers

by Lynnford Beachy



Question:

“Wouldn’t it seem that everybody will be resurrected at Christ’s second coming (both righteous and unrighteous) the way it reads in Revelation 1:7: *‘and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.’*”? Then all the wicked would be slain by the brightness of his coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8), not to live again until the thousand years are finished (Revelation 20:5). But then verse 6 says: *‘Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.’* So if there is a special resurrection before the first general resurrection, then would not Christ come with each resurrection as Revelation 1:7 says: *‘Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.’*”? Can you please help me learn more truth?”

Tennessee

Answer:

You brought up a very good point. It seems that the trouble you are having is with the understanding of Revelation 1:7. Let us notice some things about this verse. *“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.”* (Revelation 1:7) The word “every” was translated from the Greek word *πας*. This Greek word was used 1243 times in the New Testament. Let’s notice a few verses where this word was used.

Jesus said, *“And ye shall be hated of all [πας] men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”* (Matthew 10:22) Does every person hate you? Certainly not!

John wrote about the second beast in Revelation 13, saying that, *“he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all [πας], both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads.”* (Revelation 13:15, 16) Will this power be able to cause every person in the world to receive the mark of the beast? Certainly not! The Bible says there will be 144,000 who will not accept the mark of the beast.

Of John the Baptist Mark wrote, *“And there went out unto him all [πας] the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all [πας] baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.”* (Mark 1:5) Was every

person in Jerusalem and Judaea baptized by John in the river Jordan? Certainly not!

Some of John’s disciples came up to him and said, *“Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all [πας] men come to him.”* (John 3:26) Did all men in the world come to Jesus at that time? Certainly not!

As you can see from the above verses the Greek word *πας* can be used to signify every individual or thing in totality, or it can be used in a general sense, to signify a large amount of people or things. Even today, we use the words “all” or “every” in a general sense at times. For example, someone could say, “You mean you don’t know who Osama bin Laden is, everybody knows who Osama bin Laden is.”

So it is possible for Revelation 1:7 to mean that when Christ comes the second time, every eye shall see Him that is alive on the earth at that time. This does not have to include everybody who has ever lived on this earth in the past. It is certain that everyone on the earth at the time of Christ’s second coming will see Him come. Jesus said, *“Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.... And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”* (Matthew 24:26, 27, 30) Notice the last portion of this text that is in bold letters. This is almost word for word with what it says in Revelation 1:7.

Everyone living upon the earth at that time shall see Him come. This, however, does not require God to raise from the dead all those who have died in the past for them to see Him come.

There is a portion of Revelation 1:7 that indicates that at Christ’s second coming at least some of the wicked who have died long ago, will be alive to see Him come. It says, *“every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.”* I believe this statement includes people like Caiaphas, Herod, Pilate, the Roman soldiers who pierced Christ’s hands and feet, and perhaps certain others. Jesus told Caiaphas, *“Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”* (Matthew 26:64)

The Bible speaks of two general resurrections, one of the just and the other of the unjust. *"There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."* (Acts 24:15) These resurrections take place at different times, with a thousand years separating the two. (See Revelation 20:4-6.) We know that the first resurrection takes place at the second coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16), and that the wicked will not take part in this resurrection. (Revelation 20:5)

So in order for there to be some wicked people, who have died long ago, alive when Christ comes, there must be a special, small resurrection before the second coming of Christ. The twelfth chapter of Daniel seems to indicate this as well. Here we read, *"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."* (Daniel 12:1, 2) Here it says that many people will be resurrected, but it does not say "all." Of those people who will be resurrected, the Bible says that some are raised to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. There will be some righteous, and some wicked raised at this time. This must take place just prior to the second coming of Christ in order for those who pierced Him to be able to see Him when He comes.

A special resurrection just prior to Christ's second coming does not contradict the biblical teaching that there are two general resurrections, and that the first will be the resurrection of the righteous at Christ's second coming. We know that there was a small, special resurrection long before Christ comes the second time because it is recorded in the book of Matthew. Here we read, *"Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."* (Matthew 27:50-53)

Here again we read of a resurrection where many people arose from the dead. In this case, the righteous were the only ones who took part in this resurrection. This was a special resurrection that took place long before what the Bible calls "the first resurrection" takes place. Christ did not come to earth with the clouds of glory at this

special resurrection, and there is no record that He will come at the special resurrection of those who pierced Christ. When Christ comes the second time, then all the righteous dead will be resurrected.

I hope this helps to answer your questions regarding this topic.

Question:

"I am writing to you concerning your August 2001 newsletter... I want to write to you about your grammar and translation statements concerning the Greek text. I am sorry to write these things to you but your Greek is poor and should be stopped unless you take some classes... I refer you to your response to a reader on page 4 concerning the masculine pronouns used in the Greek text when the Holy Spirit is being spoken of. These pronouns are αὐτός and ἐκεῖνος. These pronouns have masculine, feminine, and neuter genders... Therefore your first error is when you say, 'The Greek words are not gender specific of themselves.'... It is slightly correct that the translation from Greek to English reflects the English understanding of gender when referring to objects as opposed to persons. Your examples of the translation of the pronoun as 'it' are good." Maryland

Answer:

Thank you for your kindness in sharing these things with me. I was wrong to write that the Greek pronouns αὐτός and ἐκεῖνος are not gender specific of themselves. I would like to publicly apologize to the readers of *Present Truth* for this mistake. Thanks to your prompting, a very helpful Bible program for the computer, and the guidance of God's Spirit, I have found out that these pronouns are gender specific. However, my original findings were correct in so far as the gender of the nouns determine the gender of the corresponding pronouns.

After studying the genders of nouns and pronouns in Greek, I have found several things that I would like to share with all of you. I would like to inform the readers of *Present Truth* that I am not a Greek scholar. I simply use the tools which God has placed in my hands and I learn as I go. Thanks to God, I know much more about Greek genders than I did a few months ago. I encourage each of you to study everything out for yourself and do not accept my word as an authority. *"Let God be true, but every man a liar."* (Romans 3:4)

Jesus said, *"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he [ἐκεῖνος masculine with Strong's #1565], the Spirit [πνεῦμα neuter] of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself [ἐαυτοῦ masculine with*

Strong's #1438]; *but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He* [εκεινος masculine with Strong's #1565] *shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*" (John 16:12-14)

Notice that the pronouns in this verse are masculine while the noun "Spirit" is neuter. This indicates that the pronouns do not refer to "Spirit" but rather to some other noun under discussion earlier. We find that noun in verse 7. Jesus said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the **Comforter** [παρακλητος masculine] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (John 16:7)

However, we know that the Comforter is the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:26)

I would like you to notice something here. It is true that the Greek word that was translated "Comforter" is a masculine noun that refers to the Holy Spirit. However, this does not indicate that the Holy Spirit is a literal male individual separate from the Father and His Son.

For example, an angel said, "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the **babe** [βρεφος neuter] wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a **manger** [φατην feminine]." (Luke 2:12) Here is an example of how the gender of nouns cannot be relied upon to determine the personality of nouns. The Greek word that was translated *babe* is a neuter noun even though the babe is a male person. In the same sentence the Greek word that was translated *manger* is a feminine noun even though a manger is an inanimate object. If there were any Greek pronouns in this verse referring to either the babe or the manger, the pronouns would be the same gender as the nouns they modify.

I would also like to point out that the Greek word παρακλητος that was translated *Comforter* was used five times in the Bible. Four times it was translated *Comforter* and one time it was translated *Advocate*. John wrote, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an **advocate** [παρακλητον] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1) So Jesus Christ is the Comforter yet, more specifically, it is the Spirit of Christ that is our Comforter. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Galatians 4:6) The Spirit of Christ is not a separate person from Himself and therefore it is proper to refer to Christ, or to His Spirit as our Comforter. However, using the Greek word παρακλητος in the masculine

gender to refer to the Holy Spirit does not indicate that the Holy Spirit is a separate individual from the Father and His Son.

Many times in the Bible Jesus is referred to as a "Lamb." The Greek word that was translated "Lamb" is a neuter noun even though we know Jesus is a male person. "These shall make war with the **Lamb** [αρνιον neuter], and the **Lamb** [αρνιον neuter] shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." (Revelation 17:14)

So it is evident that the gender of titles in Greek for an individual or a thing does not indicate that a person or thing is literally male, female, or neuter.

I would like to point something out here. Please notice the two different Greek pronouns that were translated "he" in John 16:12-14. In each case the pronoun is masculine. The Greek pronouns εκεινος and εαυτου, even when they are masculine, do not always indicate that the noun they modify is literally a male person. Oftentimes, εκεινος and εαυτου in the masculine gender refer to inanimate objects or ideas rather than personal beings.

Let us examine a few verses that will make this plain. We will start with the Greek word εκεινος when it is in the masculine gender.

"At **that** [εκεινω masculine] **time** [καιρω masculine] Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." (Matthew 11:25) It is obvious that *time* is not a personal being, but rather, it is a created entity showing that εκεινος in the masculine form does not necessarily refer to an actual being.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth **that** [εκεινον masculine] **field** [αγρον masculine]." (Matthew 13:44) Again, it is plain that *field* is an inanimate object, yet it is referred to using a masculine pronoun.

Here are a few more examples:

"And when the men of **that** [εκεινου masculine] **place** [τοπου masculine] had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased." (Matthew 14:35)

"Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of **money** [στατηρα masculine]: **that** [εκεινον masculine] take, and give unto them for me and thee." (Matthew 17:27)

"Wherefore **that** [ἐκεῖνος masculine] **field** [ἀγρος masculine] was called, *The field of blood, unto this day.*" (Matthew 27:8)

"Whosoever shall fall upon **that** [ἐκεῖνον masculine] **stone** [λίθον masculine] shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." (Luke 20:18)

(For more examples of ἐκεῖνος in the masculine gender referring to inanimate objects, also see Matthew 12:1; Matthew 14:1; Luke 20:35; John 1:8; John 11:49; John 11:51; John 12:48; John 18:13; Acts 12:1; Acts 16:3; Acts 19:16; Acts 19:23; Acts 28:7; Ephesians 2:12)

Now let us look at some examples where the Greek pronoun ἐκεῖνος is found in the feminine gender when it refers to inanimate objects.

"In **those** [ἐκεῖναις feminine] **days** [ἡμεραις feminine] came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea." (Matthew 3:1) Obviously *days* are not individual persons, and an accurate English translation should never have "she" as a pronoun referring to "days."

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon **that** [ἐκεῖνη feminine] **house** [οἰκία feminine]; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." (Matthew 7:25) Again, *house* is obviously not a personal being, yet it is referred to by a feminine pronoun.

"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a **sin** [ἁμαρτία feminine] unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for **it** [ἐκεῖνης feminine]." (1 John 5:16) Obviously *sin* is not a personal being even though it is referred to by a feminine pronoun.

(For more examples of where the Greek pronoun ἐκεῖνος in the feminine gender refers to inanimate objects, please see the following verses: Matthew 7:22, 27; 8:13, 28; Matthew 9:22, 26, 31; 10:14, 15, 19; 13:1; 14:35; Mark 1:9; 2:20; 3:24, 25; Luke 2:1; 4:2; 5:35; John 1:39; 4:39; Acts 2:18, 41; 7:41; 2 Corinthians 7:8, etc.)

Now let's look at the Greek pronoun ἐαυτοῦ in the masculine gender, where it refers to an inanimate object.

"It is like a **grain** [κوکκω masculine] of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and **it** [ἐαυτοῦ masculine] grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it." (Luke 13:19)

Now let's look at some examples of where the Greek pronoun ἐαυτοῦ is used in the feminine gender and refers to inanimate objects.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of **itself** [ἐαυτης feminine]. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:34)

"And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against **itself** [ἐαυτης feminine] is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against **itself** [ἐαυτης feminine] shall not stand." (Matthew 12:25)

Based on the evidence of the Scriptural usage of the Greek pronouns ἐκεῖνος and ἐαυτοῦ, it is clear that the usage of these pronouns in the masculine gender referring to the Holy Spirit does not prove that the Holy Spirit is an individual being separate from the Father and His Son. It is clear that you cannot conclusively prove whether an object is a living, being based solely on the gender of a noun or pronoun used when referring to it. The attempt on the part of some Trinitarians to prove that the Holy Spirit is a personal being, based on the fact that the Greek pronouns ἐκεῖνος and ἐαυτοῦ are found in the masculine gender in John 16:13, has been shown to be without foundation. In fact, in John chapter 14 where Jesus began His conversation about the Comforter, neuter pronouns are used rather than masculine pronouns.

Let's examine that now. Jesus said "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the **Spirit** [πνεῦμα neuter] of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth **him** [αὐτο neuter] not, neither knoweth **him** [αὐτο neuter]: but ye know **him** [αὐτο neuter]; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." (John 14:16-18)

If we are to properly translate verse 17, based on the gender of the nouns and pronouns, we must translate it in this way: "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth **it** not, neither knoweth **it**: but ye know **it**; for **it** dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:17) The New American Bible translated this verse in the following way: "the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows **it**. But you know **it**, because **it** remains with you, and will be in you." (John 14:17 NAB) And in the Rotherham Bible it reads like this: "The Spirit of truth,—which, the world, cannot receive, because it beholdeth **it** not, nor getteth to know **it**. But, ye, are getting to know **it**; because, with you, **it** abideth, and, in you, **it** is." (John 14:17)

Some Greek-English Interlinear Bibles translate John 14:17 by using the pronoun "it" as well. In one Greek-English Interlinear Bible this verse was translated in this way with a footnote that read something like this: "The Greek word πνεῦμα which was translated Spirit in

this verse is neuter and therefore we have used the pronoun 'it' rather than 'he,' even though we know the Holy Spirit is a person." Now, how these people know that the Holy Spirit is a person remains a mystery to me.

Even in the King James Bible the Holy Spirit is referred to as "it" at least three times.

*"And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and **it** abode upon him."* (John 1:32)

*"The Spirit **itself** beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."* (Romans 8:16)

*"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit **itself** maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."* (Romans 8:26)

Every person has a spirit, but in no case is that spirit a separate person from the one who owns the spirit. I have a spirit, but it is not a different person from me. God the Father has a Spirit, and His Spirit is holy, but His Spirit is not a separate person from Himself. If it were, the Bible would support this idea, but it does not. (For a thorough study on this subject, please contact us and request a free copy of the tract entitled "The Holy Spirit.")

I will show a few examples where the Greek pronoun αὐτος is used in the Bible in the neuter gender.

*"But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink **it** [αὐτο neuter] new with you in my Father's kingdom."* (Matthew 26:29)

*"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth **it** [αὐτο neuter], that it may bring forth more fruit."* (John 15:2)

*"And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw **it** [αὐτο neuter] for the multitude of fishes."* (John 21:6)

*"For I neither received **it** [αὐτο neuter] of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."* (Galatians 1:12)

Now let's look at a few examples where the Greek pronoun αὐτος is used in the masculine gender and refers to inanimate objects rather than male individuals.

*"Neither do men light a candle, and put **it** [αὐτον masculine] under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house."* (Matthew 5:15)

*"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one **pearl** [μαργαριτην masculine] of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought **it** [αὐτον masculine]."* (Matthew 13:45, 46)

*"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a **corn** [κοκκος masculine] of wheat fall into the ground and die, **it** [αυτος masculine] abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."* (John 12:24)

Now let's look at a few examples where the Greek pronoun αὐτος is used in the feminine gender and refers to inanimate objects rather than female individuals.

*"And if thy right **hand** [χειρ feminine] offend thee, cut **it** [αυτην feminine] off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."* (Matthew 5:30)

*"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that **house** [οικια feminine]; and it fell: and great was the fall of **it** [αυτης feminine]."* (Matthew 7:27)

*"Our fathers had the **tabernacle** [σκηνη feminine] of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make **it** [αυτην feminine] according to the fashion that he had seen."* (Acts 7:44)

*"And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the **city** [πολις feminine] was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of **it** [αυτη feminine] And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in **it** [αυτη feminine]: for the glory of God did lighten **it** [αυτης feminine], and the Lamb is the light thereof."* (Revelation 21:21-23)

From the evidence we have examined, we have seen that the use of any pronoun in the masculine gender, referring to the Holy Spirit, does not indicate that the Holy Spirit is a separate being apart from the Father and His Son. You cannot determine whether an object is a personal being or an inanimate object based solely upon the gender of a noun or pronoun in the Greek. It is clear that whatever we are to learn about the personality of the Holy Spirit, we cannot rely on the gender of nouns and pronouns, but we must look elsewhere.

Question:

"I am studying the January 1999 issue of *Present Truth* again, entitled, "The Importance of Knowing the Truth About God." Can you prove with Scripture that God the Father was counseling with His Son in Zechariah 6:12, 13?

"I have a question on your question: Why are there only two thrones, mentioned in the book of Revelation, which will be in the new earth? You gave no scriptural reference to answer this question, that I can understand. If I look up throne and thrones in the concordance I see a

throne and thrones through Revelation, but not two thrones. Can you please explain?" *Tennessee*

Answer:

Thank you for bringing up these questions. Yes, the Scripture indicates that the Father and His Son counselled together in Zechariah 6:12, 13. Zechariah wrote, *"And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."* (Zechariah 6:12, 13)

We are told to behold the man whose name is "the Branch." Who is that? Isaiah wrote, *"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins... And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious."* (Isaiah 11:1-5, 10)

We know this is talking about Christ because Paul quoted this verse in reference to Him in Romans 15:12. Also, the Branch is said to come out of the stem of Jesse, the father of David. (Acts 13:22) In the book of Revelation we read, *"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."* (Revelation 22:16)

This conclusively proves that Jesus is the Branch spoken of in Zechariah chapters 3 and 6. Since there is only one other Person mentioned as taking part in the counsel in Zechariah 6, verses 12 and 13, namely "the LORD," and Christ and the LORD are spoken of as "both," then "the LORD" in these verses must be a Person other than Christ. This Person is obviously God the Father, for He is the One who "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." The counsel is between the Father and His Son and nobody else.

Regarding the two thrones in the book of Revelation. You are right that "thrones" are mentioned as well as "throne." The "thrones" mentioned are found in Revelation 20:4 and are occupied by the righteous saints during the thousand years. These thrones are subordinate thrones compared to the thrones of God and His Son. The "throne" spoken of most often in Revelation is the throne of the Father, as we see in Revelation chapters 4 and 5. We know the Father is the One seated on this throne because Christ approaches this throne and takes a book out of the hand of the One seated on the throne. (Revelation 5:6, 7) We also know that Christ ascended up to heaven to sit with the Father on His Father's throne. Jesus said, *"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."* (Revelation 3:21)

Notice there are two thrones mentioned here. The throne of Jesus, and the throne of His Father. Jesus also mentioned His throne to His disciples when He said, *"Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* (Matthew 19:28) Jesus said that in the regeneration He will sit *"in the throne of His glory."* This does not take place until the second coming of Christ, for Jesus said, *"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory."* (Matthew 25:31) Right now Christ has *"set down with [His] Father in his throne,"* Paul wrote, *"We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."* (Hebrews 8:1) In the new earth Christ will sit upon His own throne.

Of the new earth John wrote, *"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."* (Revelation 21:22) He also wrote, *"And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him."* (Revelation 22:3) So there are two thrones mentioned in the book of Revelation that belong to divine beings. There are other subordinate thrones that will be occupied by men, but there is no third throne that belongs to a third divine being called "the Holy Spirit." This was the point of the statement in the article you mentioned.

I hope this helps to answer your questions.

Question:

"Some friends of mine are saying it is not good to celebrate Christmas and Easter for they were named after gods. Is that true or false and what proves it?" *Ghana*

Answer:

I do not believe Christmas was named after a false god, but it is a generally accepted fact that Easter was named after *Eastre*, a Teutonic goddess of spring. Many of the common rituals that are practiced on Easter and Christmas have pagan origins, and many have no Christian counterpart to even lend a pretense to their continued practice by Christians. There are many ways to prove these things, and I will just share a few things I found in the *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia*, on this subject.

Under the article *Easter* this encyclopedia says, “Easter, a Christian festival, embodies many pre-Christian traditions. The origin of its name is unknown. Scholars, however, accepting the derivation proposed by the 8th-century English scholar St. Bede, believe it probably comes from *Eastre*, the Anglo-Saxon name of a Teutonic goddess of spring and fertility, to whom was dedicated a month corresponding to April. Her festival was celebrated on the day of the vernal equinox; traditions associated with the festival survive in the Easter rabbit, a symbol of fertility, and in colored Easter eggs, originally painted with bright colors to represent the sunlight of spring, and used in Easter-egg rolling contests or given as gifts.” (“Easter,” *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia*)

This encyclopedia also says, “Sun worship persisted in Europe even after the introduction of Christianity, as is evidenced by its disguised survival in such traditional Christian practices as the Easter bonfire and the Yule log on Christmas.” (“Sun Worship,” *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia*)

Regarding Christmas this encyclopedia says,

“Roman Catholics first celebrated Christmas, then known as the Feast of the Nativity, as early as 336 AD. The word Christmas entered the English language sometime around 1050 as the Old English phrase *Christes maesse*, meaning “festival of Christ.” Scholars believe the frequently used shortened form of Christmas—Xmas—may have come into use in the 13th century. The X stands for the Greek letter chi, an abbreviation of *Khristos* (Christ), and also represents the cross on which Jesus was crucified.

“Historians are unsure exactly when Christians first began celebrating the Nativity of Christ. However, most scholars believe that Christmas originated in the 4th century as a Christian substitute for pagan celebrations of the winter solstice. Before the introduction of Christmas, each year beginning on December 17 Romans honored Saturn, the ancient god of agriculture, in a festival called Saturnalia. This festival lasted for seven days and

included the winter solstice, which usually occurred around December 25 on the ancient Julian calendar. During Saturnalia the Romans feasted, postponed all business and warfare, exchanged gifts, and temporarily freed their slaves. Many Romans also celebrated the lengthening of daylight following the winter solstice by participating in rituals to glorify Mithra, the ancient Persian god of light (see Mithraism). These and other winter festivities continued through January 1, the festival of Kalends, when Romans marked the day of the new moon and the first day of the month and year.

“Although the Gospels describe Jesus’ birth in detail, they never mention the date, so historians do not know on what date he was born. The Roman Catholic Church chose December 25 as the day for the Feast of the Nativity in order to give Christian meaning to existing pagan rituals. For example, the Church replaced festivities honoring the birth of Mithra, the god of light, with festivities to commemorate the birth of Jesus, whom the Bible calls the light of the world. The Catholic Church hoped to draw pagans into its religion by allowing them to continue their revelry while simultaneously honoring the birthday of Jesus. The Eastern Orthodox Church took a slightly different course. By the end of the 4th century the Eastern Church in Constantinople had also begun to acknowledge December 25 as Jesus’ birthday, but it emphasized the celebration of Christ’s baptism on January 6 as the more important holiday.

“Over the next 1000 years, the observance of Christmas followed the expansion of Christianity into the rest of Europe and into Egypt. Along the way, Christian beliefs combined with existing pagan feasts and winter rituals to create many long-standing traditions of Christmas celebrations. For example, ancient Europeans believed that the mistletoe plant held magic powers to bestow life and fertility, to bring about peace, and to protect against disease. Northern Europeans associated the plant with the Norse goddess of love, Freya, and developed the custom of kissing underneath mistletoe branches. Christians incorporated this custom into their Christmas celebrations, and kissing under a mistletoe branch eventually became a part of secular Christmas tradition.

“During the Reformation of the 16th century, Protestants challenged the authority of the Catholic Church, including its toleration of surviving pagan traditions during Christmas festivities. For a brief time during the 17th century, Puritans banned Christmas in England and in some English colonies in North America because they felt it had become a season best known for gambling, flamboyant public behavior, and overindulgence in food and drink.” (“Christmas,” *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia*)

Regarding Santa Claus this encyclopedia says, "The Christian figure of Saint Nicholas replaced or incorporated various pagan gift-giving figures such as the Roman Befana and the Germanic Berchta and Knecht Ruprecht. The saint was called Sankt Nikolaus in Germany and Sanct Herr Nicholaas or Sinter Klaas in Holland. In these countries Nicholas was sometimes said to ride through the sky on a horse. He was depicted wearing a bishop's robes and was said to be accompanied at times by Black Peter, an elf whose job was to whip the naughty children." ("Santa Claus," *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia*)

This is a very brief history of Christmas and Easter. It is obvious to me that these holidays did not originate with Christ and His apostles, but rather entered the Christian church through the papacy at about the same time as Sunday worship, immortality of the soul, consciousness of the dead, the trinity, etc., in an attempt to make pagans feel at home in the Christian church. These holidays, along with many other pagan practices and beliefs in Christianity, show that paganism has been introduced and widely accepted in the Christian church of the fourth century. To continue these pagan practices is simply to continue in paganism. Many people are unaware of the paganism in the Christian church, and God winks at their ignorance. *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."* (Acts 17:30)

Now that light is shining on this subject we must examine ourselves and determine whom we wish to follow, God or men. As for me and my house, we have chosen not to celebrate these pagan holidays. However, we find joy in the Thanksgiving time to get together with loved ones and thank the Lord for what He has done for us.

I hope this helps to answer your questions.

Question:

"If we believe and worship one God as Christians, why don't we attend one church and name the church after one name?"

Ghana

Answer:

The sad fact is that most Christians worship a god who is different from the God who is revealed in the Bible. Many serve a god whom they think is cruel enough to burn people for billions of years, even though the Bible says, *"the soul that sinneth it shall die,"* (Ezekiel 18:4, 20) and that the wicked *"shall be as though they had not been."* (Obadiah 16) Many serve a god who is so lenient that He is content to have His children continue sinning until the Lord comes, even though Jesus said,

"Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever." (John 8:34) And Paul wrote, *"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"* (Romans 6:16)

Many Christians serve a god whose commandments are so weak and meaningless that "one day in seven" is as good as *"the seventh-day,"* which is *"the Sabbath of the Lord thy God."* Most serve a god who is "one god in three persons," otherwise known as the trinity, even though the Bible says, *"But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."* (1 Corinthians 8:6)

Most serve a god who claims that he sent his son into the world to die, when in reality he sent his companion into the world to pretend to be his son and then pretend to suffer and die, thus making their god out to be a liar. God says, *"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."* (1 John 5:10)

I could continue with many other such blatant contradictions, but this is enough to show the reality that most Christians serve a god who is not revealed in the Bible. Therefore, it would not be truthful, nor ethical to put them all in one denomination and claim that they are all the true followers of Christ. Moreover, if different views about God are accepted and permitted in God's true church, then we might as well admit the Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, etc., into the Christian church as well.

It would be wonderful if every professed Christian would follow the written Word of God, and be obedient to all its commands for our lives. If this were the case, then we would only have one Christian church in this world, and we could all go by the same name. If this were to happen, I would recommend the name "Christian" rather than any current denominational name like Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, etc. And I would stay away from any form of hierarchy and let Christ be the head instead of any man. Let us go forth and proclaim to the world the true God of the Bible to help this goal be accomplished.

I hope this helps to answer your questions.

Question:


"If you commit sin and pray to God for forgiveness, what are some of the things which will show that you are forgiven?"

Ghana

Answer:

First of all, we must believe that God forgives us regardless of what outward signs indicate that He has forgiven us. God has promised that He will accept us if we come to Him. Jesus said, *"him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."* (John 6:37) And John wrote, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9) We have these promises, and we can rely upon them 100%. It is *"impossible for God to lie."* (Hebrews 6:18) When we come to Him we must believe that He accepts us because He has promised. When we do this we can never be lost, never.

However, there is a difference between presumption and faith. Faith is dependence upon the Word of God only to do what that Word says. Presumption is expecting that God will do something for us even though we have not met the requirements to receive what we expect to be done for us. One of the requirements for forgiveness is *faith*. We must *"ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord."* (James 1:6, 7)

Another requirement is acknowledging that we have done wrong. David admitted to God, *"I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me."* (Psalms 51:3) Another requirement is sorrow for sins. David wrote, *"For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin."* (Psalms 38:18) Another requirement is a determination to stop your sinful practice. Solomon wrote, *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."* (Proverbs 28:13) If you have met these requirements, then you must believe with all your heart that God has heard your prayer and has forgiven your sins. Accept the pronouncement, *"thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."* (Isaiah 6:7) 

(Even though we do not have all the answers, thank you for your questions. Please keep them coming. *Editor*)

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Editor: Lynnford Beachy, HC 64 Box 128-B, Welch, West Virginia 24801, phone: (304) 732-9204, fax: (304) 732-7322, e-mail: berean@present-truth.net.

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HC 64 Box 128-B
Welch, West Virginia 24801
U.S.A.

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